



North Shore Mountain Bike Association 101

Understanding the Organization's Function and Purpose

Updated October 2025

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Land Acknowledgement

NSMBA builds and maintain trails on the shared lands of the Coast Salish peoples; the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səl̓ílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.



Vision and Mission Statements

Mission

We are a volunteer-driven non-profit organization dedicated to caring for a sustainable trail network within the community.

Vision

Trails for all, trails forever!

The Origins of the North Shore Mountain Bike Association

The NSMBA was formed in the winter of 1997 in response to trail sabotage on mountain bike-specific trails on the North Shore. A perceived threat to public access to mountain biking trails on the North Shore from land managers and encroaching residential developments also served as a catalyst for the formation of the organization. There were suggestions that Grouse Mountain intended to take over the Fromme trails and charge users to access the trails; that further housing development would take away trails on Cypress, Fromme and Seymour; and that B.C. Parks officials on Seymour would close down trail access. The problems facing North Shore mountain bikers included the lack of a grassroots organization capable of formulating a united response to these potential and future threats. Although local mountain bike shops and the mountain bike industry were key stakeholders in the future of mountain biking on the North Shore, their focus was on running and maintaining their businesses.

In response to this reality, and rumours in the winter of 1997, an impromptu and informal meeting at the Black Bear Neighborhood Pub resulted in the decision to form a mountain bike advocacy group for the North Shore. After much discussion, the name was chosen, an executive was elected and a decision was made to incorporate as a not-for-profit society. We are a registered not for profit charity (# 870778461RR0001) and under our constitution, the purpose of the NSMBA is to:

1. To preserve and enhance the accessibility, to cyclists and other members of the community, of trails on the North Shore of Vancouver.
2. To maintain, repair, improve and construct trails on the North Shore for the use and enjoyment of cyclists and other members of the community.
3. To protect and preserve the environment by maintaining, repairing and improving trails on the North Shore.
4. To protect and preserve forest areas on the North Shore by maintaining, repairing, improving and constructing trails on the North Shore.



2010 Vision and Mission Work

The current Vision and Mission statements were chosen by the Board of Directors In 2010.

At this same time, the Board began rebuilding the organization. Since this time, the organization has grown significantly, established strong relationships with key stakeholders and land managers as well as engaging the community, and has revitalized much of the trail network on Fromme, Seymour and Cypress mountains.

The NSMBA recognizes and acknowledges that it is not a decision-maker with respect to trails other than by delegation from land managers, members, and the community at large. Any respect the NSMBA has from the community is earned and must be continually earned by the NSMBA's actions and words.

2022 - 2027 Strategic Plan

In 2022, the Board of Directors adopted a Strategic Plan - a planning and directional tool which will support and instruct the work of the NSMBA over the next 5 years.

The three pillars of the Strategic Plan are:

Responsible Land Use - Leading advocacy efforts, community partnerships and trail work best practices toward a common approach resulting in "Trails For All"

Community Impact - Attract and retain a diverse group of people - builders, staff, board, volunteers and members - "Trails For All"

Financial Resilience - Securing a sustainable future for the NSMBA and planning ways to fund growth to ensure "Trails Forever"

Operations

Internal NSMBA systems, processes and policies are always being reviewed and updated—including: community and industry engagement, overall program management and administration, grant and funding processes, communications (including website and social media), stakeholder engagement and advocacy, database management, and clearly defining the role and responsibilities of the Association. This is an ongoing process as the organization continues to grow, adapt, and develop.



From Grassroots to Leaders

Stewardship, Education, and Sustainable Trail Solutions

Since 2010 the NSMBA has focused on sustainable trail solutions through educational initiatives, both local and regional, which emphasize long-term care of the trails.

The NSMBA's primary goal is to serve the mountain bike community and create a balanced trail network that provides challenge and progression for all riders. Much of our work addresses issues on multi-use trails so, although primarily a mountain bike association, the NSMBA is cognizant and respectful of all users, often embarking on work that benefits the wider community.

The NSMBA's work plans are always evolving with the needs of the trail network and community; the majority of work focuses on continued revitalization and maintenance of the existing trails to ensure a sustainable network; replacement of technical trail features to ensure safety, challenge, and progression continue to exist in the trail features which are synonymous with the North Shore; and increasing progression options and connectivity to improve the overall balance of the trail network.

Recently, this has been highlighted by improved beginner and intermediate options to complement the existing advanced trails within the North Shore trail inventory, and building climbing routes to improve access and variety within the network. Future work will continue ongoing maintenance and repair and expanding opportunities for all mountain bikers on the North Shore.

The organization focuses on a sustainable approach to trail building and maintenance, looking for solutions and techniques that will last, be enjoyable to the targeted trail users, and reduce or have minimal environmental impact. The North Shore is a temperate rainforest, receiving as much as 4000 mm of rain annually, and a large amount of the NSMBA's work focuses on mitigating erosion through water management.

The People in the Organization

The NSMBA relies predominantly on volunteers. The Board of Directors are all volunteers and are responsible for planning for the future of the organization. The Board is supported by our staff: an Executive Director, full time Trail Crew, a Marketing Manager, and an Administrator.

The Board of Directors

The Directors of the NSMBA are elected by the membership at the Annual General Meeting. The directors are responsible for planning for the future of the organization. Each director has a duty to act honestly and in good faith with a view to the best interests of the Association.



Originally board members were expected to be involved in the planning, organization, and execution of the NSMBA's activities including advocacy, fundraising, stakeholder management, community engagement, events, marketing and communication. Around 2020, the board made the decision to shift the governance structure that included functioning as a "working board" to a more professional governance structure where the board is now an "advisory board".

Executive Director

The NSMBA Executive Director is responsible for the successful leadership and management of the NSMBA organization according to the strategic direction set by the Board of Directors. The Executive Director will implement the vision and mandate of the NSMBA. The Executive Director provides leadership in identifying priorities and objectives, directs staff and contractors, supports committees and helps ensure the NSMBA's financial and organizational viability.

Trail Crew

The NSMBA employs both full-and part-time trail crew staff to perform trail maintenance, trail building, and other tasks related to the operations of the organization within the network. This work encompasses both maintenance activities, as well as reroutes and new trail construction. The trail crew, and trail crew leader work with local Land Managers to support management of existing trails and future proposals to the trail network.

Admin Team

The purpose of the NSMBA admin team is to support the strategic direction set by the Board of Directors. The employees implement the vision and mandate of the NSMBA by administering the sustainable trail management efforts of the organization. These activities include; fundraising, grant applications, event planning and executing, payroll, benefits administration, and many more behind the scenes efforts to ensure that advocacy and trail building can continue.

Volunteer Paid Trail Builders

The NSMBA has a group of 55 volunteer trail builders who assist with hosting both public and private trail days for sponsors, school groups, community groups and volunteers.



Why Join?

Membership

As a mountain biker or other trail user the single most important thing you can do to ensure your ongoing enjoyment of the trails is to become a member of the NSMBA, which are valid for one year from the date of purchase. There are 5 categories of membership: Adult, Family, Youth, Super Member, and Corporate. The NSMBA also offers various levels of sponsorship opportunities which include yearly memberships; please visit nsmba.ca for details.

Becoming a NSMBA member means that you care about keeping the trails of the North Shore open and accessible. Your membership gives the NSMBA a stronger voice with sponsors, Land Managers, and various levels of government.

Your membership dues provide direct financial support to enable the NSMBA to:

- Purchase materials, tools, and equipment for our volunteer and trail builders to use during trail days.
- Purchase insurance that allows the NSMBA to conduct activities for our members and host trail days.
- Manage and deliver the programs that educate the community on trail building's evolving best practices.
- Engage proactively with Land Managers to ensure their continued support and investment in the trail network.
- Pay professional trail builders to lead specific maintenance projects and trail days, ensuring trails remain open, safe, sustainable, and FUN!

Your support is essential to fuel our efforts to keep the trails in great condition and your membership directly supports NSMBA trail work and allows the NSMBA to work with land managers to ensure we have continued access to trails.

Creation of the Trail Adoption Plan, Trail Academy, and Shore Corps

These programs were created to foster community stewardship, create sponsor buy-in, and harness the power of volunteerism. The Trail Adoption Plan (TAP) allows partners to adopt their very own trail. This partnership allows for additional trail days and work to be completed on our trail network.

The NSMBA Builder completes an Annual Trail Assessment and creates a Work Plan for the adopted trail. The work plan is proposed to the appropriate land manager who then approves the work or makes edits as needed. It is important to note that ultimately the Land Manager needs to approve any and all work conducted on a particular trail. Our



greatest opportunity for ensuring “trails forever” is building strong relationships, based on trust and credibility, with the Land Managers.

Once approved by the Land Manager, the NSMBA Builder will then work with the Adopter to jointly deliver up to six trail days. The NSMBA Builder also conducts preventative maintenance on the trail throughout the year.

TAP accounts for approximately 100 trail days each year, contributing approximately 8000+ hours of labour annually. This is the primary driver in maintaining the trail network.

Land Manager approved trails that do not have a sponsor and which are not being cared for by an independent builder will be cared for by the NSMBA. The trail crew, volunteers, and public trail days can be utilized to ensure ongoing maintenance.

The Trail Academy

The Trail Academy was initially created to share the theory and techniques of trail building to NSMBA members. It offered several courses in sustainable trail care practices and since its inception in 2015, over 1000 members have completed the NSMBA Trail Academy and contributed over 1500 hours of volunteer work annually.

The NSMBA has restructured its education programming and focussed on training and onboarding new volunteer builders who are committed to being volunteer builders year round.

The Shore Corps

The NSMBA Shore Corps was previously a group of trained volunteers who stay connected through community events, a Facebook group, and regular newsletters. Ongoing development was available through mentorship programs, future trail academy courses, and special projects.

Youth Stewardship Program

In 2017, the NSMBA began a school outreach program to educate youth in the sustainable care of our trail network. The focus of this program is engaging with youth and having them participate in volunteerism through trail care and recreation management best practices.

Trail Building Best Practices

When developing work plans for the trails the NSMBA follows and adheres to the following best practices: Whistler Standards, IMBA Guidelines, and the Best Management Practices of the respective land manager.



The NSMBA uses the most robust applicable standard and applies these principles in our unique topography and climate, with a focus on long term sustainability.

Please visit the following link for a copy of the Whistler Standards:

https://cyclingbc.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/trail_standards_first_edition.pdf

Please visit the following link to access IMBA's trail building resources:

<http://www.imbacanada.com/resources/trail-building>

The NSMBA builds upon this existing foundation of knowledge and creates the highest standard possible to withstand our Sustainability Equation of:

- High usership
- Extreme rainfall
- Easy access
- Year-round availability

To achieve this goal of a sustainable trail network and deliver on the NSMBA's mission of 'Trails for all, trails forever' the following activities are required to support the building standards and guidelines:

- Education—Build capacity within our community and encourage leaders for today and tomorrow.
- Relationships—Build strong and positive relations with Land Managers, other trail user groups, and other community stakeholders.
- Unity—Work together as a respectful community towards the common goal Trails for All, Trails Forever.
- Capacity—Continue to engage the community with initiatives like TAP to ensure we are able to keep pace with the increasing usage.
- Etiquette—Create a culture of respect and tolerance in which it is understood the actions of the few affect the opportunities for all.
- Communication—Directors and staff endeavour to clearly communicate the NSMBA's strategy, direction, and work to the community. The NSMBA continually seeks mechanisms to garner input to key decisions and processes of the organization from members and other stakeholders.

Trail Difficulty Rating—How and Why?

The North Shore offers unique riding terrain; trail difficulty ratings must be applied to the topography we have while adhering to globally recognized standards.

Any trail difficulty rating must allow a new rider or visitor to easily ascertain the skill level required for a trail; it must not be based on the relative difficulty compared to other trails in the area or what regular users of the trails are accustomed to riding.

The foundation for the trail difficulty ratings applied on the North Shore come from the Whistler Standards in conjunction with the IMBA Trail Rating Guidelines.

The IMBA Trail Difficulty Rating System can:

- Help trail users make informed decisions.
- Encourage visitors to use trails that match their skill level.
- Manage risk and minimize injuries.
- Improve the outdoor experience for a wide variety of users.
- Aid in the planning of future trails.

Many trail networks use this type of system, most notably resort-based mountain biking trail networks. These criteria should be combined with personal judgment and trail-user input to reach the final rating.

Trail Difficulty Rating System					
	Easiest White Circle	Easy Green Circle	More Difficult Blue Square	Very Difficult Black Diamond	Extremely Difficult Dbl. Black Diamond
Trail Width	72" or more	36" or more	24" or more	12" or more	6" or more
Tread Surface	Hardened or surfaced	Firm and stable	Mostly stable with some variability	Widely variable	Widely variable and unpredictable
Average Trail Grade	Less than 5%	5% or less	10% or less	15% or less	20% or more
Maximum Trail Grade	Max 10%	Max 15%	Max 15% or greater	Max 15% or greater	Max 15% or greater
Natural Obstacles and Technical Trail Features (TTF)	None Avoidable obstacles 2" tall or less Unavoidable obstacles 2" tall or less Unavoidable bridges 36" or wider TTF's 2' high or less, width of deck is greater than 1/2 the height Short sections may exceed criteria	Unavoidable obstacles 8" tall or less Avoidable obstacles may be present Unavoidable bridges 24" or wider TTF's 4' high or less, width of deck is less than 1/2 the height Many sections may exceed criteria	Unavoidable obstacles 15" tall or less Avoidable obstacles may be present May include loose rocks Unavoidable bridges 24" or wider TTF's 4' high or greater, width of deck is unpredictable	Unavoidable obstacles 15" tall or greater Avoidable obstacles may be present May include loose rocks Unavoidable bridges 24" or narrower Short sections may exceed criteria	Unavoidable obstacles 15" tall or greater Avoidable obstacles may be present May include loose rocks Unavoidable bridges 24" or narrower Many sections may exceed criteria

Trail Signs—What do they mean?

The NSMBA works with the Land Managers to help create the appropriate signage for the trails. The Land Manager is the final authority on signage. The photos below provide examples of signage used on trails within the District of North Vancouver; signage from other areas of the North Shore may differ slightly, but should contain and convey the same information. The purpose of these signs is to help promote and foster a trail network that works for all users, and to increase safety by enabling users to successfully navigate the network.

Please remember that we are all ambassadors for mountain biking

The behaviour of a single mountain biker reflects on the mountain biking community as a whole.

Multi Use Trails

Trails designated as multi-use are to be enjoyed by all (mountain bikes, runners, and hikers)—the symbols clearly depict this. The dog paw represents trails which are suitable for commercial dog walkers.

Each user group must share the trail—courtesy has the right of way!



A) Hiking Only

These trails are reserved for foot traffic only, bicycles are not permitted on these trails.



B) Mountain Bike Primary

This designation stipulates that mountain bikes will be the predominant user group; however other user groups may use these trails. Other users should give way to bicycles and should be aware that bicycles will be descending the trails. Foot traffic should use caution when using these trails.



C) One Way Only

Some mountain bike trails are designated one way only to enhance rider safety and reduce risk of collisions.



D) Ascent Trails—Mountain Bike Primary

Ascent trails are purpose-built trails for bicycles to climb up. An ascent trail is not built to sustain downhill use—bicycles are not permitted to descend these trails. Foot traffic is free to travel either direction.

When using these trails it is important that foot traffic stay on the trail and not braid corners. This will lead to erosion due to water coursing down the braids.





Who are the Land Managers?

Seymour, Fromme, and Cypress

- BC Parks
- Metro Vancouver
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)—managed by Recreation Sites and Trails BC (RSTBC)
- District of North Vancouver (DNV)
- Grouse Mountain Resorts LTD
- District of West Vancouver (DWV)

BC Parks, Metro Vancouver, RSTBC, DWV, and the DNV are engaged land managers and have clear rules on mountain bike trails on the land they manage.

Any trail work or maintenance in Metro Vancouver, CMHC, DWV, and DNV land must be permitted. It is illegal to build or ride in BC Parks unless it is explicitly permitted. BC Parks clearly signs areas where riding is permitted (e.g. Empress Bypass, Old Buck). It is a serious offence to build trails and structures or alter the environment in BC Parks.

In January 2018 the NSMBA and Recreation Sites and Trails BC, as CMHC's designated land manager, reached a formal trail maintenance agreement for many of the trails within this area. This RSTBC agreement is to perform trail maintenance and at this time does not include funding or net new trail design.

The NSMBA works closely with the District of North Vancouver (DNV), the District of West Vancouver (DWV) and Metro Vancouver to maintain and improve the trail network. With ongoing cooperation we see a bright future and the opportunity to continue to improve the trail network for all styles and abilities of riders. The NSMBA and the DNV have a trail maintenance agreement for trails on both Fromme and Seymour.

The NSMBA works closely with the Trailforks app to manage the trail database online. You can view the trails and Land Managers of the North Vancouver area here:
<https://www.trailforks.com/region/north-vancouver/>

Grouse Mountain Resorts LTD

Grouse Mountain Resorts is the owner of land on Fromme, above the 6th switchback along Mountain highway. 7th Secret, Bookwus, Upper Oil Can, and Pile of Rocks are in or partially on their land.

In fall of 2014 the NSMBA received a request to inform the Fromme trails users to cease the use, building, and maintenance of trails above the 7th switchback.



The NSMBA regularly communicates with the Operations manager of Grouse Mountain, and that relationship has included more frequent communication and collaboration with the opening of the Grouse Bike Park in 2025.

Currently the NSMBA does not have a formal working agreement with Grouse Mountain Corp and so avoids putting resources into the trails that are on that land.

Use of public lands, how it works

Much of the North Shore trail network exists on provincially-managed lands (historically referred to as “crown land”). While these lands are legally administered by the Province of British Columbia, they remain the unceded territories of local Indigenous Nations (the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations); the land was taken from the Indigenous people who lived here since time immemorial by a colonial government, without consent and without treaties being signed.

“Crown land” is not public in the sense that anyone can use it for anything they want. The public is generally permitted to access “crown land”, however there is no overriding right by the public to use it without restriction. The *Land Act* and the *Forest Range and Practices Act* makes it an offence to use this land without lawful authority or construct a structure on this land without authorization.

The land West of the Capilano River is traditionally seen as Squamish Nation land, whereas that to the East is Tsleil-Waututh Nation land. Although the North Shore is included in the Musqueam “Statement of Intent” boundary, there is little historical presence of Musqueam people on the North Shore.

In the case of the North Shore, many of the recreational trails traverse between three separate public land managers—BC Parks, Metro Vancouver and the District of North Vancouver, each of which has legislation or bylaws governing the management and administration of their recreational lands. For example, Mt. Seymour Park falls under the management of BC Parks, who administers their recreational lands in accordance with the Park Act and the Park Conservancy and Recreation Regulations while Lynn Headwaters Park and Lower Seymour Conservation Area fall under the jurisdiction of Metro Vancouver and are governed by other legislation and bylaws that assign the responsibility to manage the lands.

DNV land is not Crown land, but instead is owned by the District of North Vancouver. The District can set restrictions around its use both in its capacity as the owner of the land and as the local government having authority. The Community Charter gives the District the authority to regulate, prohibit and impose requirements in relation to public places (i.e. parks) per s. 8(3)(b). Parkland in the District falls under the management of the District and is subject to the restrictions set out in the Park Control Bylaw 2733, namely the prohibition against damaging a park in section 2 and the prohibition against erecting structures in a park without a permit in section 8. In addition, policy documents such as the



[Fromme Mountain Trail Classification Study](#) set goals and directions for recreational activity.

*Add CMHC/RSTBC - Seymour Trails

*Add DWV/BPP - Cypress Trails

Policy on Unsanctioned Trails

The NSMBA advocates against the construction of trails or features which have not been authorized or permitted by the land managers. Unsanctioned trails can have a significant impact on the environment.

The proliferation of unsanctioned trails is one of the biggest threats to mountain biking on the North Shore. On land for which the NSMBA has a formal work agreement with a Land Manager, trails or features constructed without the authorization of the Land Manager pose several problems for the NSMBA. Unsanctioned trail construction can limit our ability to maintain existing trails and are a significant deterrent to being permitted to construct any new trails.

Over the last 10 years mountain biking has formally been recognized by the Land Managers who have jurisdiction over Mount Fromme, Mount Seymour and Cypress. The trail network, which was mainly built prior to this, was evaluated and a trail classification system developed. This process was the mechanism for the Land Managers to legitimize these trails for mountain bike use. It also enabled the NSMBA to conduct authorized trail work on land managed by the DNV, Metro Vancouver, and BC Parks on Mount Fromme and Mount Seymour.

The creation of unauthorized alternate lines on an existing sanctioned trail can place the sanctioned trail at risk. Improperly constructed lines may contribute to erosion and dilute the integrity of the trail. Unpermitted trail work can jeopardize the NSMBA's relationship with the relevant Land Manager. It also demonstrates a lack of respect for the original and/or existing builder.

The NSMBA recognizes that many builders work independently from the NSMBA, and often unsanctioned trails are built out of frustration with the system or from a perceived need for more advanced or varied trail experiences. The NSMBA encourages builders to work within the existing systems and will strive to engage in respectful dialogue with independent builders. The NSMBA encourages communication with independent builders, and will assist permitted builders as requested, to the extent the organization has the capacity and depth to do so.



Developing Concise Work Plans

Each year the NSMBA must submit work plans to each Land Manager; these plans are a request to conduct trail maintenance, care, and enhancements. If approved the NSMBA receives a permit for the work and can then begin to execute the work.

This process holds true for all builders (NSMBA or independent) wishing to conduct sanctioned work on trails on DNV or Metro Vancouver land. Ultimately, it is up to the respective Land Manager to determine what work is permitted.

The Future of the NSMBA

The North Shore Mountain Bike Association (NSMBA) Vision and Mission statements were revised and finalized in 2016 by the Board of Directors through multiple SWOT* analysis sessions. The Vision and Mission statements are periodically revisited to ensure that they remain relevant and appropriate.

* A SWOT analysis is a structured planning method used to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats involved in a project or in a business venture

The best way to affect change is to get involved. The NSMBA is an inclusive organization, we welcome your participation and contribution to help drive us forwards in achieving our shared mission and vision.

Join in, become part of the community helping shape the future of the trails on the North Shore. Become a member, volunteer, corporate donor, or Director. Our progress is driven by volunteers and fueled by passion.

The NSMBA is focused on the needs of the mountain biking community as a whole. We strive to support the evolution and ongoing growth of the sport of mountain biking. We engage in a preventative maintenance model, the desired outcome is a gentler transition between our past and the future. This constant evolution is the key to having a world-class trail system.

A major factor in this evolution is etiquette respect. The NSMBA seeks to foster a community that not only has respect for the environment but also fosters respect for all users of the trails.

This philosophy in combination with adherence to best building practices is the NSMBA's approach to fulfilling our vision of *Trails for all, trails forever!*